

RECOGNITION OF THE ASSISTANT MINORITY LEADER

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The distinguished assistant minority leader is recognized.

A TIME FOR ACCOMPLISHMENTS

Mr. REID. Mr. President, the Republican leader and the Democratic leader appointed Senator MCCONNELL and this Senator to work on the legislative aspects of the 9/11 Commission. If the cooperation among Members is as good as Senator MCCONNELL and I have had, we are going to be able to move forward on this bill, I think with bipartisanship. And we need to move forward. I think the 22 of us who serve on this task force feel that way.

We have to understand how much there is to do these next few days. There is a lot to do. We had a very productive last 2 weeks when most people expected a tremendous amount of partisanship this last little bit before we break for the elections. But from my observation it has been the opposite. There has been cooperation, and we have gotten a lot done. The next 2 weeks are important.

Also by virtue of the schedule we will have a difficult time this week because Tuesday we have an event for retiring Senators. That has been scheduled for months and there is no way out of that. That is Tuesday evening. Then, of course, Thursday is the first Presidential debate. It makes a lot of sense to me that we be in tune with that. I know there are some Senators who have events related to that. We will have to keep those things in mind.

I hope we can move forward on these matters which the leader has talked about. There is an opportunity to get a few things done with a limited time agreement. During the time we are working on this matter, we should go ahead and do that to prevent a lot of backlog next week before we head home before the recess.

I appreciate the leader's comments. I hope my observation is a correct one. We have been doing very well in spite of what some of the political prognosticators have said. This isn't a time for meltdown. This is a time for accomplishing a lot.

When the Chair announces morning business, we have two on the Democratic side who wish to speak, Senator HARKIN and Senator NELSON of Florida.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The majority leader is recognized.

NORTH PLATTE CANTEEN IN NORTH PLATTE, NEBRASKA

Mr. FRIST. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the Senate proceed to the immediate consideration of H. Con. Res. 161, which is at the desk.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The clerk will report the resolution by title.

The legislative clerk read as follows:

A concurrent resolution (H. Con. Res. 161) recognizing the outstanding efforts of the individuals and communities who volunteered or donated items to the North Platte Canteen in North Platte, Nebraska, during World War II from December 25, 1941, to April 1, 1946.

There being no objection, the Senate proceeded to consider the concurrent resolution.

Mr. FRIST. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent the concurrent resolution be agreed to, the preamble be agreed to, the motion to reconsider be laid upon the table, and that any statements relating to the concurrent resolution be printed in the RECORD.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. Without objection, it is so ordered.

The concurrent resolution (H. Con. Res. 161) was agreed to.

The preamble was agreed to.

Mr. FRIST. Mr. President, obviously this particular resolution recognizes the outstanding efforts of the individuals and communities that volunteered or donated items to the North Platte canteen in Nebraska during World War II, as the resolution was put forward by the distinguished Senator from Nebraska, the occupant in the Chair.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The Senator from Nevada is recognized.

ORDER OF PROCEDURE

Mr. REID. Mr. President, when the Senate goes into morning business, I will yield 10 minutes on behalf of the Democratic leader to the Senator from Florida, Mr. NELSON, followed by 20 minutes to the Senator from Iowa, Mr. HARKIN.

RESERVATION OF LEADER TIME

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. Under the previous order, leadership time is reserved. Under the previous order, 25 minutes remain.

Mr. REID. Mr. President, I am wondering if we could have a delay of a few minutes so Senators on both sides will have a full 30 minutes.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. Is there objection? Without objection, it is so ordered.

MORNING BUSINESS

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. Under the previous order, there will now be a period for the transaction of morning business with a full 60 minutes, with the time equally divided between the two leaders or their designees.

HEALTH CARE IN AMERICA

Mr. FRIST. Mr. President, I rise to speak on an issue we discussed last week that I will shed further light on, which is the broad topic of health care

in America. I listened last week with some disappointment to the comments made in the Senate by the distinguished Democratic leader regarding health care costs. The senior Senator from Massachusetts repeated some of the Democratic leader's critique of the President's policies on health care. Because both of my colleagues left an incomplete picture, I take a moment to step back and give a more realistic assessment of where we are today and where we should be going.

America has the best doctors, the best nurses, the best hospitals, the best medical technology, the best medical breakthrough medicines in the world. There is absolutely no reason we should not have in this country the best health care in the world. The time has come for common sense—not Washington—to determine how patients interact with doctors and with hospitals. The time has come for health care professionals, not Government or HMO bureaucrats, to make health care decisions. The time has come to put patients and consumers back in charge.

Under the leadership of President Bush, we have taken measurable, concrete steps toward making quality health care more affordable, more available, and more reliable. Although much work remains to be done, a comprehensive, independent study confirms that we are, indeed, moving in the right direction.

One report released last week by the highly valued Lewin Group examined the costs of health care proposals put forward by President Bush and by Senator JOHN KERRY. This is the second nonpartisan independent analysis in recent weeks to compare the Presidential candidates' proposals side by side. It is the second independent study to find that the price tag of Senator KERRY's plan is twice—two times—what he claims. The Lewin Group study finds Senator KERRY's proposals would cost \$1.25 trillion—not billion but trillion—over the next 10 years and still leave 20 million Americans uninsured. This is similar to the findings of another independent study released 2 weeks ago by the nonpartisan American Enterprise Institute. That study put the price tag of Senator KERRY's plan at \$1.5 trillion.

We all know it is difficult and, yes, next to impossible to project the accurate cost of major Federal Government programs. We know all too well Washington has that annoying habit of underestimating the cost of just about everything it does and sticking taxpayers at the end of the day with that tab. However, if these two independent studies are even mildly accurate, Senator KERRY's estimates are off by half a trillion. Let me say that again: Senator KERRY's estimates for his health care proposals are off by half a trillion dollars. Talk about fuzzy math. To put that in perspective, that is more than the cost of the WIC Program, the Low Income Energy Assistance Program, the Ryan White Program, and the School Lunch Program combined. In